

Mr. MURPHY. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman will yield, one of the things that is in this Medicare bill we passed a while ago now, that many people are forgetting, has to do with the entry physical that people get, but there are also elements in there that have to do with some patient management, the pharmacist is working more monitoring the medication, and communication. I would ask my colleague to speak on that, because that may be a thing that we really are not quite used to, physicians and pharmacists working more closely together as part of that Medicare bill so that there is less hospitalization.

I know one hospital in my district, Washington Hospital, really found that by doing careful patient management of those with heart disease, they reduced rehospitalizations by 50 percent. That is a massive savings in costs and certainly much better for the patients, in many cases saving some lives. I wonder if the gentleman could comment about that.

Mr. GINGREY. Madam Speaker, I am very familiar with Washington Hospital, although I did not realize it was in the gentleman's district, the great work that they did. But there is no question about it, this issue.

I mentioned the cost-shifting from Part A and Part B, and I think that will be substantial. But this emphasis, and the gentleman is right, it is part of this bill, not just prescription drugs Part D, but also that entry level physical, that focus on disease management and making sure that people, whether they do it through Medicare Advantage, whether an HMO-type program, or even traditional Medicare, in screening for things like colon and rectal cancer, breast cancer with mammograms, prostate cancer screening, cholesterol screening so that we do not wait until the person has a heart attack and has to have that quadruple bypass that is very expensive. So again, I wanted to make sure, and I appreciate the gentleman from Pennsylvania giving me the opportunity to have time to discuss that, because we are hearing it. We are hearing it on the floor of the House, maybe from both sides of the aisle, and folks back home, naturally they want us to spend what we have to spend, but not a dime more, and I agree with that.

But I think this will be clearly the wrong message to send to our seniors. I mean, this President and this Congress were not the first elected folks to promise to deliver a prescription drug benefit for our seniors. Indeed, Medicare started in 1965, so what are we talking about is about 40 years of the program, and they have been waiting a long time. And to ask them to wait a couple of years or indeed maybe indefinitely so that we can offset some of these costs of responding to the bird flu or responding to Hurricane Katrina, I think would be a huge mistake.

Mr. MURPHY. Well, Madam Speaker, I think it is one of those areas that,

again, I think that when one just looks at the numbers of costs up front, and we have some of those frightening numbers, I do not know how many hundreds of billions it may be. And I understand the concern of our colleagues who may have opposed the Medicare bill for Part D because they were concerned about the cost. But I believe this has some innovative aspects in it and some that we have to pay attention to.

Oftentimes, people say that one of the definitions of insane behavior is doing the same thing over and over again, expecting the same results, but this patient management aspect and the integration of care between physicians and pharmacists is vitally important. I am hoping that as people review their Medicare Part D options that they also ask questions about that, when they call 1-800-Medicare or go to medicare.gov, or particularly when they call 1-800-Medicare, feel free to ask about that, or ask Members' offices to talk about that. It is something that is so very, very important. It is going to be a different aspect of health care that we follow up on.

Mr. GINGREY. Yes. And I think too it needs to be said that when we had this debate, a huge debate, in December of 2003, as my colleague recalls, we were freshmen at that point in our political careers, both of us, but there were a lot of folks, particularly on the other side of the aisle, that were very angry, very angry with AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons, because they had the unmitigated gall, the audacity to support this President and this Republican leadership in trying to get this Medicare modernization prescription drug bill passed and to fulfill this promise that was made. They even suggested that people tear up their AARP card as an act of defiance and protest against this bill, and discourage people, the working poor who could get the prescription drug discount card in that transitional program, and get \$600 worth of credit for each of 2 years during that program's existence, \$1,200. To think that they discouraged people, and many of them were discouraged and did not get that benefit. I hope now that for Medicare Part D, and the sign-up is beginning soon, that they will be encouraging them, not discouraging them, to sign up.

Mr. MURPHY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his time tonight and also the indulgence of our colleagues in listening to this. We will continue to push these health care issues so vitally important for the health of our constituents and of all Americans.

On my own Web site at murphy.house.gov I have further information on health care, FYIs, as I call them and sent to my colleagues every week. I hope people will look at that, and I hope my colleagues will continue to work with us, but really all Members of Congress, not only those with a

health care background, but together, we will see some major changes in not only saving lives, but saving money.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET CUTS BAD FOR AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Madam Speaker, I am the cochair, along with BARBARA LEE from Berkeley, California, of the 62-member Congressional Progressive Caucus. Our progressive promise includes a fair and balanced budget that represents all people in this country. So I am pleased to take this time in this special order this evening to talk about the cruel and shameful budget and the tax cuts the Republican majority wants to ram through this House on Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

After hearing my Republican colleagues in the first hour special order tonight, I would hope that they are paying a great deal of attention to what is going on with this reconciliation budget. Otherwise, there is not going to be any money for all of those good ideas they have for health care. It was a pleasure to hear their good ideas, now that we are going to talk about where the money will be and where the money is going in our budget, and it is something we are going to be dealing with straight up Wednesday or Thursday of this week.

It is also time for the people of this country to know what is going on. It is time to stop this railroad and help the American people learn just what the Republicans are up to. They keep acting as Robin Hood in reverse. It comes out in the various committees, and in bringing up this vote this week on the House Floor, a vote that will hurt hard-working Americans because of a package of bills in the billions of dollars, at least \$50 billion, that will include hurtful budget cuts.

But make no mistake about it. These budget priorities are outrageous. They, meaning the Republicans, want to provide \$70 billion to \$100 billion in new tax cuts for the powerful and the privileged in America who need them the least, while cutting programs for the rest of the country. And they are going to pay for these irresponsible tax cuts for the most well off by shredding the safety net for the most vulnerable in our society, those who live under or near the poverty line, and by breaking the social contract with hard-working, middle-class Americans as well.

And, oh, yes, what the Republicans do not wring out of the blood, sweat, and tears of working and impoverished Americans through budget cuts will just be added to the debt of the next generation of Americans. Can you believe it? This is the first budget reconciliation package in the history of our country that actually increases

Federal deficits at least another \$25 billion, which will be added to the deficit this year without batting an eye. While pretending to be the guardians of our Treasury, Republicans in charge of this Congress just keep borrowing and spending, piling up debt that our grandchildren and their children will owe.

Ten years ago, the Republicans took control of this House, trumpeting their Contract With America with great fanfare, if you will all remember it. But now, one decade later, it is plain for all of us to see that their slick marketing gambit has proven to be a "Contract on America," particularly those struggling to face financial ends.

The numbers and the budget trade-offs recommended in this budget package speak for themselves, but let me cite a few examples for my colleagues. To pay for a \$70 billion to \$100 billion tax cut, and these are new tax cuts, by the way, the Republicans in control of this House want to slash \$844 million from the food stamp program, which would result in 300,000 families being kicked off of this antihunger program. It would leave 40,000 children ineligible for school lunches.

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Apparently, the Republicans do not realize the number of malnourished children and Americans grew by more than 2 million in the past year. The Republicans want to cut \$14.5 billion from student aid programs at precisely the time when paying for college education has become more difficult than in any generation in the past. These shortsighted education cuts, including the largest cut in the history of the student loan program, are certain to increase the interest rates and the fees that many students will have to pay.

The Republicans are going after single mothers. They are cutting \$500 million in Federal support for child care assistance, leaving an additional 250,000 children without quality child care. Adding insult to injury, the Republicans are cutting almost \$5 billion from child support enforcement programs that help to collect money from dead-beat dads. So much for compassionate conservatism when it comes time to give tax cuts to rich cronies of the Republican majority.

The Republicans are cutting \$9.5 billion from Medicaid, the Federal program that extends basic health care to the poorest and neediest of Americans.

Home heating bills are expected to be 30 to 50 percent higher this coming winter, but that is not keeping the Republicans in control of this House from voting against full funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, LIHEAP.

And evidence is strong and persuasive that many of these programs while not perfect, we know that, have made progress towards goals shared by Americans across the political spectrum, such as preventing hunger, destitution and homelessness, protecting

children's health, and rewarding low-paid work.

When our constituents experience crises in their personal lives such as job loss or disabilities, these programs can cushion them against deep poverty.

When people have low earnings or little or no health insurance, these programs can supplement their incomes and provide essential health care coverage.

And when people reach retirement age, these programs provide some measure of retirement and health security. Research and data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and other experts around the country show that the United States system of income support benefits have helped make tens of millions of Americans healthier and more secure.

Without properly funded programs like food stamps, Medicaid, State Children's Health Insurance Programs, unemployment insurance and the supplemental security program for the elderly and disabled poor, ours will be a harsher and less compassionate society with more extreme hardship, especially among children and people who are elderly and people who do have disabilities.

The Happy Warrior, Senator Hubert Humphrey, used to remind us that the character of a society can best be judged by how it cares for those in the dawn and the twilight of life.

By this measure, the Republicans, who are in charge of all branches of our government today and who are responsible for these budget and tax cuts, are failing the American people woefully. They are particularly failing our children and students and their education.

As I said earlier, the Republican reconciliation budget will pay for between 70 and \$100 billion in new tax cuts for the rich by cutting very critical social programs.

This budget would break the backs of hard-working poor and middle-class families in order to break the bank to pay for tax cuts for wealthy families.

Let us talk about how this budget actually affects family values. Let us talk about how we could use that 70 billion to \$100 billion to keep some important promises to the average American family.

For instance, the Head Start program offers low-income families the promise that their young children will not start school at a disadvantage, but we serve fewer than half of the eligible 3- and 4-year olds nationwide.

Yet, instead of providing the \$5 billion increase that it would take to ensure this opportunity for every eligible child this year, President Bush and the Republican Congress are cutting 70 to \$100 billion in taxes at the very top level.

Almost 4 years ago, President Bush and the Republican Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act and joined in a bipartisan promise to American families that we would provide schools with resources they need to educate all of our children.

They said that they would use No Child Left Behind to diagnose where dollars were needed to turn poorer performing schools and school districts around so that actually no child would be left behind. Since then, the President and the Republican Congress have fallen more than \$40 billion short of keeping that promise. And so No Child Left Behind has become punitive instead of helpful.

We could do better by our children if we spent that \$40 billion on those children and did not cut taxes for the wealthiest people in this country. In 1975, the Federal Government promised families that it would fully fund its share of IDEA, the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. But 30 years later we are less than halfway there.

Last year, President Bush and the Republican Congress made another bipartisan promise to increase funding for IDEA by \$4 billion this year and to fully fund IDEA by the year 2011. It sounded good. A lot of us voted for it, and a lot of us did not.

But within a few months of signing the new law, the President broke his promise by more than \$3.5 billion, no, billion dollars. So we could use \$3.5 billion of the tax cuts for the wealthy to keep this bipartisan promise to fund IDEA as was promised. Or even better, we could use \$13.2 billion to fully fund IDEA up to the Federal responsibility.

Another, Federal student aid for college offers low- and middle-income families the promise of an education to prepare them for jobs in the 21st century. \$14.3 billion would enable us to offset the cuts that the Republican reconciliation budget would make to Federal student aid programs, the largest cuts, by the way, in history.

These cuts would add \$5,800 to the cost of the typical student's college loans, while students whose families can pay outright for the best colleges, and do not need loans, get another tax cut.

Another \$4.2 billion would enable us to keep another promise that President Bush has not come close to keeping. That would be to increase the annual Pell grant for low-income students to \$5,100. Or we could reduce the tax cuts for the wealthy by \$7 billion to keep the bipartisan promise made in 1998 to increase the Pell grant to \$5,800.

But at a time when the buying power of Pell grants is only about half of what it was at its peak, the President and the Republican Congress have virtually frozen Pell grants since the year 2002.

My colleagues, how we choose to allocate Federal resources is a reflection of our values, our values as Members of Congress, our values as leaders of our country. And the choices we will make this year will be one of the most critical choices any of us will make during our time in Congress.

We can pass the Republican reconciliation budget, which, I believe, makes a mockery of the term "family

values," unless of course, the only families you value are the nation's wealthiest families; or we can pass a budget that truly helps all of America's families.

I hope that we will make the right choice. I hope that we will invest in our families and their children, which, by the way, is an investment in our Nation's ability to compete in the international marketplace.

OUR NATION'S ENERGY ISSUE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. DRAKE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to share tonight what I believe to be one of the most compelling issues facing this country, and it is our energy issue.

Energy is what makes everything run. It heats our homes. It makes our businesses run. It helps us transport ourselves and goods from place to place. Energy is a part of everything we do.

Now, I come from right near Titusville, Pennsylvania, where the first oil well was drilled, and nothing has changed the world more than when we found petroleum and how it developed our whole Industrial Revolution in this country and we became the leaders of the world and how we developed our transportation system.

But today, you know, we hear a lot about the price of oil because it is published daily, and we hear a lot about the price of gasoline at the pump. And that is important to us. And it has been painful some time back when we hit over \$3 for gasoline.

But, folks, when gasoline prices were at \$3, they had doubled in the 5-year period. The real issue facing America is the price of natural gas, which has increased 700 percent in the same period of time, 5 years.

Why is it a crisis? Well, the impact is we heat our homes. It could threaten homeownership. We heat our schools, our hospitals, our YMCAs, our YWCAs, our churches, our colleges, our universities, our small businesses. Yes, everybody uses natural gas in some way, from cooking to baking to heating their homes, running something.

And we have major industries like steel, aluminum, brass, all our metals, that melt steel, that heat it to bend it or shape it. Petrochemicals, they use natural gas as a heat. They use natural gas as an ingredient. Every chemical that we buy in the grocery store or the hardware store is a derivative of natural gas.

Polymers and plastics, we do not have anything that does not have polymers or plastics connected to them. Again, polymers and plastics, a major ingredient is natural gas; and of course it is used again and again to melt it and to shape it.

Fertilizer, our farmers have been devastated this year with huge increases in fertilizer cost. Nitrogen fertilizer, the one most common, 70 percent of the cost of fertilizer is natural gas.

So our farmers have been hit very hard with the energy crisis because they have paid a lot more to run their tractors, to cultivate their farms. They have paid again to harvest their crops. They have paid with natural gas to dry the grains before they put them in storage in the big elevators. They have been hit with natural gas every way they turn.

Why are natural gas prices more harmful than oil prices? Well, when we buy \$65 oil, as it was a few weeks ago, or 58 or 59 or \$60 oil, as it is today, that is the world price. And all our competitors, far and wide, around the world pay that same price.

But that is not true of natural gas. When we paid \$14 for several months, we are down around 12 now, maybe 11, still the highest price in the records that have ever been kept, we are alone. We are the only country paying that. Canada is considerably cheaper. Europe is usually about half of our price. Our economic competitors, Japan, Taiwan and China, a third of our price. Thinking of giving all those manufacturers and processors over there another huge advantage over us economically, not only cheap labor, but cheap energy.

How can our employers compete when energy is a large part of their cost? The fact is they cannot. I was today at a celebration of the expansion of a lime company that put in new kilns and invested \$60 million in my district. And I asked them, what fuel do you use to fuel these kilns to make lime, because you heat it to 2,400 degrees. And they said, we use coal. And I said, you can be glad you do. And they said, well, we have plants all over the States. We have plants in Canada and plants in Mexico. We have natural gas plants. And I said, well how are they faring? And they said, well, we are not running those. Today's natural gas prices we cannot afford to make lime.

Folks, the problem we face with the natural gas prices that are going to be high for a long time to come, they are going to be devastating to homeownership. They are going to be devastating to small business. But they are going to force major companies to leave this country, because if they want to compete, if they want to make products that are saleable, you cannot pay three, four and five times as much.

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In South America natural gas is only \$1.60. In Russia it is only 90 cents. And I named all of our other competitors.

How did this happen? Well, for decades gas was under \$2 and oil was around \$10. Nothing competes, none of the renewables. None of the new initiatives work with those cheap, cheap prices that we had for a long time.

Now, about 10 years ago we changed a major policy in this country. Histori-

cally, it was against the law to use natural gas to make electricity. It was considered not prudent. I think we were right then, but that was changed. And so 10 years ago we took away the limitation of using natural gas to make electricity, and today one-fourth of our electricity is made with natural gas. So huge reserves of natural gas now go into making electricity.

Now, I remember at the same time when that was happening I went to a briefing in the Senate and a Daniel Yergin, who wrote the book "The Prize", a Pulitzer Prize-winning book, he said if we used a lot of natural gas to make electricity and we did not open up supply, in a few years we would develop a real shortage of natural gas in this country. That happened, because I remember the first year that it reached up over \$3, that was from under \$2 gas to over \$3. That was a major bump in the cost of heating our homes and running our businesses.

Well, the next year it was up in the high \$4s and that again was a huge percent increase of natural gas costs, and we all watched and learned. The next year, the average price last year, the average price for natural gas during the summer months when we fill our storage, in the summertime we produce more gas than we can use and we put it in huge caverns, many of them in my district in Pennsylvania, and we store it for winter usage because we do not produce enough in wintertime.

Last summer the average price was \$5.30. That was the highest price we ever paid for summer gas. It was very alarming to those who watched that. This year was even worse. We were bouncing along between \$7 and \$8 all summer; and those were waiting for new contracts, waiting for the price to come down, it just never happened. Then as we were approaching the fall we got up to around \$9 gas and sometimes even close to \$10, and then came Katrina and the other storms and a shortage of gas coming out of the gulf, and we hit \$14.50. And that was a record for gas prices in this country, and it stayed there for some month or two and now just recently has edged down into the elevens. But still it is way above.

We were talking this summer that probably sometime this winter, when the cold Canadian air comes down into the States, that we could be looking at \$10 and \$11 gas this winter. Well, we are back at \$10 and \$11 gas now and we think that is pretty good compared to \$14 a few weeks ago, but it is a huge shock to our system. It is not a price companies can pass on.

I have companies in my district that, when it reached \$8, they do not produce any more because they cannot pass that on. That cost makes it prohibitive.

Now, how did this all happen? What could we do to fix it? Well, we have huge reserves in our West and we have huge reserves on our Outer Continental